DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 143 95 EA 010 667

AUTHOR Davies, Don; And Others
TITLE Sharing the Power? A Report on the Status of School Councils in the 1970's.
INSTITUTION Institute for Responsive Education, Boston, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY Mott (C.S.) Foundation, Flint, Mich.; National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 87p.; For a related document, see EA 010 666

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Advisory Committees; Citizen Participation; *Citizens Councils; Community Role; Elementary Secondary Education; *Power Structure; School Community Relationship

ABSTRACT

An examination of the authority, the structure, and the activities of school councils, as revealed through relevant literature, field visits, workshops, interviews, and other channels open to the Institute for Responsive Education, reveals that most councils have little responsibility or power to affect educational decision-making, and rarely are given the opportunity to use such power when they do have it. The gap between what is expected from councils and what they actually achieve is due largely to "environmental forces" in the councils' relations with such groups as principals, school boards, and traditional parent groups, many of which are reluctant to share power. Still, councils have the potential to contribute greatly to education if they receive support in six areas: (1) authority must be decentralized so that councils can participate effectively at the building level; (2) councils must have adequate resources; (3) educators must have access to opportunities to improve their skills at working with parents and councils; (4) councils and other agencies must be encouraged in the coordination of their efforts; (5) councils should represent all aspects of the educational community, preferably by election; and (6) council activities should be well documented and carefully evaluated yearly. (Author/PGD)

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A Report on the Status of School Councils in the 1970's

by the Institute for Responsive Education

Don Davies, Jim Stanton, Miriam Clasby
Ross Zerchykov and Brian Powers

Prepared with the support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Group on School Capacity for Problem Solving of the National Institute of Education

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This report is based on work funded by
the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and by the
School Capacity for Problem Solving Group
of the National Institute of Education.
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FOREWORD

This report is based on two separate but related Institute for Responsive Education projects. The first, funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation of Flint, Michigan, is a project to study and improve school advisory councils and community education advisory councils. This project represents a logical extension of the long standing interest of the Mott Foundation in community education and in roles that citizens play in the governing institutions in a healthy democratic society. The Mott-funded project focuses on the work of advisory councils in a few selected communities. This publication is one of three concluding the first year of the project in the fall of 1977. The companion reports are:

1. RESOURCE GUIDE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY ON SCHOOL COUNCILS; and
2. COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCILS: A Bibliographic Essay.

This report also is based on the work of the study of citizen organizations funded by the School Capacity for Problem Solving Group of the National Institute of Education. This three-year study (1976-1979) is conducted by I.R.E. and Optimum Computer Systems, Inc. of New York City. The first year of the NIE study provided for a selective and impressionistic survey of the status of citizen participation in educational decisionmaking. The publications that have resulted from first year's work include:

1. PATTERNS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL DECISIONMAKING:
   Volume 1: Overview of the Status of Citizen Participation
   Volume 2: Diverse and Shifting Patterns of Participation
2. FEDERAL AND STATE IMPACT ON CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOLS.
3. SOCIAL SCIENCE THEORY AND RESEARCH ON PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS: A Bibliographic Essay.
4. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL DECISIONMAKING: An Annotated Bibliography.

5. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOLS: A Special Report to Policy-makers in the States.

6. A DIRECTORY OF STATE AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SERVING LOCAL CITIZEN GROUPS.

SOURCES OF DATA

The data for this status report are drawn from a variety of sources:

1. A comprehensive computer search of relevant literature was undertaken and included these data bases: Education Resources Information Center, Social Sciences Citation Index, Sociology Abstracts and the Foundation Center Data Bank. In addition, conventional literature searches were made including dissertation abstracts and periodical and book indices. More than 500 books, articles, reports, and dissertations were reviewed and summarized; annotations were prepared for most of these.

2. Field visits by I.R.E. staff working on the Mott project were made to Miami, Flint, Minneapolis, San Diego, and Los Angeles to implement the field site component of the Mott Foundation project. In each of these cities and in Boston, numbers of interviews and discussions were held with school officials, parents, and members of community organizations. In addition to these meetings, we gathered a substantial amount of written material and documentation on School Councils from school and non-school sources.

3. Through workshops, the dissemination of materials and resources, and continuous communication with project participants in San Diego, Boston, and Miami, we have obtained additional first hand insights into the actual operations and problems of councils.

4. Through I.R.E.'s informal network of local, state, and national officials and groups interested in "councils," other universities and research organizations, and our Citizen Action in Education readership, we have requested

and received a substantial number of evaluations, reports, and materials on School Councils.

5. Data, opinions, and impressions from hundreds of local grassroots people, council members, and educators have been obtained for this report through a series of I.R.E. consultations, workshops, and other field activities. Examples that were particularly relevant for this status report include: (a) a team site evaluation of the Roosevelt Neighborhood School in Louisville; (b) a two-day national workshop for 150 chairpersons of the community councils for Teacher Corps projects; (c) on-going participation with court-ordered and citizen-initiated organizations in Boston, including a Citywide Conference of Councils for parent leaders; and (d) on-going participation in a statewide evaluation of school councils in Florida for the state legislature.

6. Approximately 300 open-ended interviews were conducted in the field by staff members from September, 1976 to May, 1977 by the staff of the NIE funded study. One hundred eighty-eight interviews were conducted in seven large cities: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. In each city we interviewed a number of decision makers including the superintendent of schools, the president and other members of the school board, the education editor of the major daily newspapers, the head of the teacher union, the mayor's chief education aide, and key school administrators in the central district office, as well as other informed observers of school politics in each city.

In each of these cities we also interviewed the staff director, officers, or members of ten to twenty different kinds of citizen organizations. Four to seven researchers visited these cities for three or four days. Briefer visits were also made by one staff member to Louisville, Houston, and Denver.

Three visits were made to state capitals to interview state legislators,

legislative staff members, state department of education officials, and observers of state educational politics. These field studies took place in Denver, Sacramento, and Tallahassee.

Interviews were also conducted with foundation officials, staff members of NEA and AFT, the National School Boards Association, the Council of Great City Schools, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the National Committee for Citizens in Education, the National Coalition of Title I Parents, the Coalition of Indian Controlled School Boards, the Office of Education Administrators, the Education Commission of the States, the Children's Defense Fund, the Federal Education Project of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law, and a variety of other national and state citizen and education interest groups.

7. Since August 1976, we have continuously scanned several sources of relevant current news and information: Education Daily, Education USA, Compact, and Legislative Reports (of the Education Commission of the States) and a variety of organization newsletters.

Although the report covers an enormous range of activities and is based on large amounts of data, the results are not definitive. There are many areas where data are scanty or not available at all. The work in this report is based, in part, on a comprehensive survey of the literature, but that literature is often thin and weak. There are many more polemics and descriptive reports than there are conceptually adequate analyses, research, or evaluations. Much of the material from school systems is heavy on rhetoric and public relations salesmanship but devoid of objective assessment based on carefully and systematically gathered information. Our working hypotheses and recommendations will be tested over the next two years in the continuation of the NIE-study of citizen organizations in three cities: Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles.

The continuation of the Mott-funded project will allow further testing of these working hypotheses and provide an unusual opportunity to gain new insights and practical ideas by working intensively with citizens and educators in six communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Primary responsibility for writing and organizing the material in this report rested with James Stanton, who is the director of the Mott Foundation-funded project on advisory councils. Mr. Stanton brought to the assignment substantial experience as a community organizer and leader. He has served as director of the Cambridge (Massachusetts) Civic Association and has had public school teaching experience as well.

Important contributions were also made by Miriam Clasby, I.R.E. Associate Director; and Brian Powers and Ross Zerchykov, I.R.E. research assistants. Harriet Plaskow did the typing and assisted with editing.

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

Advocates of citizen participation may well be encouraged by the upsurge of citizen participation in the schools in the 1970's. The general rhetoric of participation has become widely accepted. More people are participating in more ways than ever before; but these same advocates might also be alarmed at how little reality there is behind the rhetoric. They might be concerned at the feeble impact and spiritlessness of much of what passes for participation. The power remains with the professionals, and administration and policymaking continues to be highly centralized and bureaucratic.

The school council at the district and individual building level has become the predominant new mode of citizen participation in the schools. There are tens of thousands of these councils and more than a million members. The purpose of this report is to look behind the statistics and the rhetoric to determine the current status of the school council phenomenon. We will ask: Are they adequate? Where do they come from? How are they set up and operated? What do they do? How are professional educators relating to them? What policies are needed to make councils more effective?

Our basic thesis in this publication is that school councils are not now, by and large, effective vehicles for citizens to affect educational policies and decisions. But, they have unrealized potential to become mechanisms for productive power sharing and partnership between citizens and educators.

Our efforts to gauge the influence and effectiveness of councils go beyond determining whether they function optimally within the guidelines accompanying their official mandates. Examining the impact of citizens through councils must also entail assessment of their substantive influence on three key areas of educational policy: the program, personnel, and budget of local schools.

Even at this early stage of the study, we are ready to take the position that, in general, the council idea has not been implemented satisfactorily. Many policy makers and political observers are disappointed that such councils have thus far failed to make a strong contribution to the development of participatory democracy at the grassroots level. They have not enhanced the power of low income and minority people. Other observers and educators are disappointed because councils have not contributed strongly to school reform. But parents and citizens who serve on the councils are often even more frustrated. Their purposes for participating are most often more pragmatic and less lofty than those of academic advocates of citizen participation or educational reformers. Most parents view council membership as a way to change or improve their own child's school. When councils make little direct impact on the quality of schooling, participant interest will fade. Public interest in participation on councils appears to remain high only as long as councils' activities relate directly to the quality of their children's education.

For example, the eighth annual Gallup Poll on Public Attitude found that only ten percent of those queried were unwilling to serve on a citizen advisory council at their local schools. The remaining 90 percent who indicated interest listed the following educational policy areas as those most in need of citizen deliberation: discipline, student-teacher relations, career education, student dropouts, teacher evaluation, the programs for handicapped students, educational costs and finance, the school program, and education for citizenship.[1] The problems with the operation of councils which have been raised here will be examined in more detail throughout this report.

Before proceeding to depict the current status of school councils, we must first provide the reader with some guidance and road maps. First, it is vital that we set forth our own ideology about citizens and institutions in a democracy

as this colors and shapes the analysis and assessment of the data we have assembled. We must also provide some guidance on terminology and types and styles of citizen organizations.

IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This report and the other work of the Institute of Responsive Education is framed by a commitment to the development of a more healthy, stable, and equitable democracy than is now found in American society. That intent hardly distinguishes us from most other students, researchers, social scientists, and social observers. But different strategies are used by different analysts in their work to promote a more genuinely democratic society. We have found that most research and writing may be grouped into three categories, reflecting three essential orientations, or strategies, for changing society.

The first strategy aims at redefining the key concept of democracy and selling the new definition to the people. This strategy underlies the work of a majority of social scientists, writers, and politicians. Elitism and meritocratic values rest at the core of their beliefs. Society, they argue, has become so technologically and politically complicated, the world has grown so interdependent, that ordinary people cannot be trusted to make decisions on social issues. Such reasoning openly insists that most people cannot anticipate the consequences and implications of the necessary decisions.[2]

These writers assert that the public interest demands careful nurture by sophisticated planners, program directors, and decisionmakers. It requires the services of a highly trained cadre of planners, technicians, specialists, professionals, and managers. Access to power is determined by merit -- academic ability, intelligence and technical skill. In a pluralistic society a group that feels left out can organize to protect its own interests. The only essential form of citizen participation is voting.

A second strategy aims at changing individuals themselves to better live and function within the system. This approach is strongly therapeutic in orientation, trying to help persons conform in a stable way to the dominant, sanctioned social values. A person's difficulties, its reasoning asserts, are self-induced or are self-generated. It rarely admits to changing what others see as external sources of people's problems in the existing order of things. Many educators, psychologists, planners, and communications experts figure prominently in the ranks of such thinkers.

The third strategy is characterized most generally by the aim of creating new opportunities for citizen participation and influence in government and institutions. This strategy requires that decisionmaking power be decentralized and that civic literacy and competence be developed throughout the society. Such a strategy arises from a fundamental belief that persons affected by governments' decisions and institutional policies have an inalienable right to contribute to the decisions and policies. The right is not bestowed by politicians, administrators, or professionals. It need not be earned by demonstrations of competence or merit or the determination of experts. In a democracy, the right to participate and influence is simply a given, belonging to the people by definition. This point of view is often popularly labeled "participatory democracy."[3]

This participatory strategy can be subdivided into two categories. The first is apolitical. Advocates of this mode emphasize the value of participation for one's own development. Participation, it is argued, results in improved organizational efficiency and better service delivery, as a sense of control over one's life and heightened feelings of self-worth emerge while participants learn practical problem solving skills. Transfer of power is not emphasized. Techniques for this type of participation include participatory

planning, group efforts in setting goals, and exercises in futurism.

The second category of participatory democracy is explicitly political. It emphasizes opening opportunities for citizens actually to participate in decisionmaking, policy determination, resources allocation, and institutional governance. Its goal is twofold: to redistribute power and enhance civic competence. Some techniques include community organizing, information gathering for political and organizational ends, the dispersing of centralized power, advocacy of individual and class rights, and the use of collaborative decisionmaking.

The two currents of participatory democratic strategies for reform of institutions often flow along separate courses. They sometimes converge, however, blending political and problem-solving thinking. They are not completely compatible.

It is the explicitly political mode of this third strategy -- participatory democracy -- that provides the ideological framework for this report. In addition, we hold that for a society like ours to operate on a truly democratic basis, citizens must be involved in decisionmaking. Americans have a strong capacity for genuine self-government: Our laws are shaped to ensure broad popular representation in decisionmaking and government. But we are far from living in a truly democratic society.

We believe that effective citizen organizations are important means for citizens to participate in government and share authority with elected office holders and professional administrators. Building effective and strong organizations, both citizen- and government-initiated, brings us closer to the ideal of self-government. Citizen involvement in political life at the local level and effective democratic participation in the operation of even as ordinary

a public institution as the public school, are crucial in the process of democratizing society as a whole.

We are not only interested in voluntary citizen organizations as vehicles for people to exercise their right to self-government. We are also interested in them as vital mediating structures between constituencies and their institutions and governments. Citizens' groups can provide a strong link between established decisionmakers and the diverse needs and wishes of the aggregate of citizens in whose interest they supposedly work. Citizen organizations protect minority viewpoints. They work as countervailing forces on government authority; and as mediating structures, they may form important links with other organizations and with persons from other communities, with other interests, working at the local, state or national levels. Such organizations also serve as a means for citizens to develop their civic competence, confidence, and power to act for their own constituencies.

Seen in this context, participatory mechanisms such as school councils can serve or impair high social purposes. Their flaws and potential are worthy of the attention of serious students or practitioners of politics.

Reasons for Participation

There is evidence that effective citizen participation can contribute to important educational and community objectives. School councils have high potential as mechanisms for citizen participation, even though this potential has yet to be realized. The contributions that participation through councils and through other kinds of organizations could make may be grouped under six general headings. The six-part scheme laid out below has proven useful in classifying the rationales frequently offered for participation. The categories are not intended to be mutually exclusive; each may be valid and appropriate in its own right and in combination with other reasons. The reasons include attempts

to affect:

- Policy -- Citizen participation leads to insitutional policies which are more responsive to the needs of constituents and communities served. Citizen participation will contribute to developing school policies and practices which are more effective and equitable than is generally the case now.

- Service delivery -- Citizen participation may improve the nature and quality of educational services. The capacity of the institution to understand and solve educational problems is enhanced if parents and other citizens are part of the problem-solving effort.

- Community development -- Effective citizen participation may contribute to the development of a healthy and stable community, where goods and services are adequately and fairly distributed and where people have a sense of their collective efficacy, confidence, and power.

- Individual development -- Participation can contribute to the development of a sense of efficacy and confidence on the part of the constituents of citizen organizations. Participation also may provide other benefits to individuals -- training, education, job advancement, personal status, and social pleasure.

- Performance of students in schools -- Citizen participation can contribute to improved performance by students, with higher levels of academic achievement; lower rates of truancy, dropouts, vandalism, discipline, and other problems; better student attitudes and behavior; and better post-secondary education.

- Organizational effectiveness -- Participation can contribute to making citizen organizations more effective. (It is both an input and output, cause and effect.)

Observers have often overlooked the contribution that citizen participation mechanisms such as councils can make toward tapping new human resources in communities. We believe effective and powerful forms of participation can draw more urban poor, minority people, and working-class whites into school and community affairs. The increased participation of these people can contribute to all of the six objectives listed above, especially to individual development and community development. The insights and talents of these people have not been adequately tapped and schools and communities are the poorer for this neglect.

Terminology

In this report and other I.R.E. publications, we use the phrase citizen participation frequently. The word citizen refers to parents and other adult residents of a community. It normally excludes students, even though students are sometimes involved in some of the activities known as citizen participation. This usage of citizen also excludes professional educators and school staff only to make the important distinction between non-educators (e.g. "the public laypersons") and the professional and other employees of the schools.

Participation, as we use it, means taking part in activities in order to exercise powers or influence -- to have impact on decisionmaking in policy matters. However, much difficulty and confusion arise with this usage in that much that is called participation involves little or no power or influence. In looking at citizen participation through school councils it is particularly important to consider degrees or levels of power or impact as well as the nature and purpose of the activity.

We use the term involvement (rather than participation), where there is no clear intent to exercise power or to have an effect on decisionmaking.

Categories of Organizations

School councils are but one of many forms of collective citizen participation and there are many varieties of groups included under the general label, "school advisory council." We offer the following distinctions and classifications to aid in understanding the diverse participatory forms.

1. Origins

The two major categories are citizen-initiated and mandated. The former are originated by citizens themselves and typically operate independently of the school or school system. The latter are formed by the action of a local school or school system (a formal or informal mandate) or by state or Federal

legislative, executive, or judicial action. Nearly all school councils are in the mandated category. Mandated groups can be classified as follows:

a. by individual school

b. by school district

c. by state government

- legislation
- executive action (e.g. regulations)
- court action

d. by the Federal government

- legislation
- executive action
- court action

2. Auspices

Whether citizen-initiated or mandated, groups can be classified according to their auspices or affiliations:

a. Independent - single organizations or coalitions of organizations not formally a part of a school, school system, or government agency.

b. Federated - local voluntary organizations that are a part of a regional, state, or national federation (e.g. League of Women Voters, Urban League).

c. School-based - groups that are directly affiliated with or a part of a school system.

Nearly all school advisory committees, like building level PTAs, are in the third category.

3. Geographic Scope

For school-related councils, three categories of geographic scope commonly exist:

a. School - related to a single school building or site or a cluster of two or three related school buildings or sites.

b. Area - related to a subdistrict, zone, or area of a school district.

c. Citywide (or county or school districtwide).

Until recently citywide councils were the predominant mode. Since the early 1970's, however, Federal, state and local mandates have stressed building level councils. Only in a few large districts are there intermediate level (zone, area, subdistrict) councils. Examples are in Dade County, Florida; Boston; and Chicago.

The Term "School Council"

We use the term "school council" in the title and throughout this report to mean mandated, school-based groups with school building, area or citywide geographic scope. The term can encompass groups that concern themselves with single issues or programs (e.g. bilingual education) or multiple issues. However, in this report our data relates primarily to multi-issue councils.

The major emphasis in this publication is on councils at the school building level mandated by state action or local school board initiative. Only limited attention is given to the Federally mandated groups (these are examined in some detail in another I.R.E. report).[4] We also largely exclude councils for Community Schools or Community Education Programs because these are the focus of a companion report.

Many other terms are commonly used for what we herein call school councils. These include school advisory committee, parent or community advisory committee or council, school-community advisory council, and neighborhood school board.

Styles of Participation

More important than definitions and classifications for understanding the varied modes of citizen participation is differentiation according to style of participation. The model developed by Arnstein is useful as it fastens attention on both the objectives and the results of organized participatory activity. Arnstein sets forth eight styles or models of participation.[5]

TYPOLOGY OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Participation	Citizen Control
	Delegated Power
	Partnership
Tokenism	Placating
	Consulting
	Informing
Non-Participation	Therapy
	Manipulation

The styles represent a continuum from the two bottom rungs, described as "manipulation," to the top, "citizen control," where citizen obtain full managerial power. Three intermediate levels -- "informing," "consulting," and "placating," -- represent levels of tokenism, since the "have-nots" have no genuine voice in the decision. They may be listened to but have no authority to insure that policy makers heed their views. Only one intermediate level, "partnership," which permits citizens to negotiate and engage in "trade-offs" with traditional "power holders" meaningfully advances the degree of citizen partipation. The other level, delegated power, gives have-nots a majority voice in the decisionmaking process.

In a later section of this report we will apply a simplified version of this eight part model to the data we have assembled about advisory councils.

The origins of councils, their historical context and their mandates will be considered next. This will be followed by a survey of councils' structure, membership and scope of authority. In the subsequent two sections we will look at the scope and degree of councils' involvement in areas of school policy

and at the problems they continue to experience in their relations with school administrators, school boards and traditional parent groups. We will then focus on the unrealized potential of councils and discuss the implications of the experience with Federally-mandated councils such as Head Start, Follow Through, and ESEA Title I. We conclude the report with a series of policy recommendations.

SECTION II

ORIGINS OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

The voice of citizen participation in educational decisionmaking traditionally has been channeled through duly elected or appointed local school boards and informally, through a variety of associations or task groups. The concept of a citizen council, a formal structure with citizen membership beyond that of the school board, first developed in Berkeley, California in 1919. Established by the Superintendent of Schools and the Chief of Police, that council was designed to address the youth problems in the Berkeley area.[6] Other councils emerged across the nation, especially during the depression years and in the baby boom years after World War II. Many were ad hoc efforts to bring schools and the community together to address the social problems of the day. By 1954 an estimated 10,000 citizen advisory councils were directly involved with the public schools at the building or district level, aiming to improve school community relations.

Although the council movement seemed dormant for the rest of the 1950's, it received new impetus from the Civil Rights movement and the War on Poverty, which focused attention on discriminatory practices in public education, particularly in the minority neighborhood of cities. Through a series of legislative acts, the Federal government emerged as the prime mover in institutionalizing citizen participation with the educational programs it funded at the State and local levels. By the early 1970's, some states and localities had taken lead roles in the movement, authorizing multi-purpose citizen councils at the school district or building level.

The current burgeoning of citizen participation in the schools and the emergence of school councils can best be explained as consequences of the outburst of citizen involvement in schools in the 1960's. The educational offi-

cials under assault during this period responded to the demands for increased public control of school policymaking by establishing vehicles for citizen involvement within the school structure. The critics outside schools, along with non-professionals supporting the educational establishment, would be brought into the system.

Before the 1960's citizen participation in schools and public life was not a burning issue. Those non-professionals who did participate in decision-making were drawn from the middle class and other traditional civic elites. They often wielded their influence behind the scenes or served on blue-ribbon appointed advisory committees. The rest of the public played its role in school affairs by paying taxes, voting in municipal elections for school boards, working with traditional parent associations and occasionally serving on an appointed, special issue task force. Participation was virtually synonymous with supporting schools, school officials and school programs.

It is generally assumed that during this period school boards and their policies adequately represented a consensus of citizen interests. This assumption had grown from the "reforms" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when control of urban schools passed from ward politicians and laymen to elite Boards of Education and professional administrators. Small, districtwide bodies replaced the larger school boards elected from neighborhood districts. The stated aim of the reform had been to take partisan politics and patronage out of education. In the process, the public lost its control of the schools.[7]

School superintendents were transformed quickly from clerks to upper-level, professional managers and dominant decisionmakers. The laymen elected to the boards increasingly relied on the judgments of these professionals. They authorized the further professionalization of schools and permitted the growth of a cadre of middle level school administrators. The result was a large, cen-

tralized school bureaucracy. The public had little say in school affairs. Among white, middle class parents faith and trust in educators as competent, expert, and sympathetic to community interests prevailed. In the years before the 1960's, school professionals developed their own set of attitudes toward public involvement in educational policymaking. The public was to be kept at arms length, for the most part, but key civic minded persons would be called on to rally support for school policies. Participants would be used to sell the schools to the public.

In the post-World War II social upheaval, the educational constituency began to change. School policies, however, only occasionally reflected a capacity to respond to the new voices in the community. The professional staff in schools was growing; graduates of schools of education with academic training in management and public policy refined bureaucratic administrative procedures. Meanwhile, criticism of schools in cities by more vocal blacks and newly arrived Hispanics mounted. Public policies greatly increased housing and educational segregation by race and class in cities and this development was exacerbated by the growth of nearly all white suburbs. Changes in Federal immigration policies were followed by the arrival of large numbers of non-English speakers who have found few sound employment and housing opportunities available. The long standing and persistent discrimination experienced by poor, non-white, and non-English speaking citizens fueled the Civil Rights movement and the demands for change in the schools.

In the midst of the expanding economy of the 1950's and early 1960's, while white, middle-class citizens grew increasingly affluent, expectations of economic and social improvement for the poor and minorities was high. But such hopes were frustrated on several fronts, especially in education, with the resistance of political and educational leaders to school desegregation efforts.

The end of the 1960's saw growing alienation and unrest in the cities, which were followed by riots and social turmoil. The Federal government responded to the "crisis in the cities" with the War on Poverty, which instituted new aid programs for target populations and required community representation in their planning and execution. Citizen advisory boards and governing councils were created with legislation for the major educational programs in the anti-poverty effort: Head Start, and Follow Through, and later Title I.

The sixties stand as an era of challenge to established patterns of authority. The urban poor became participants in educational politics and aggressive modes of participation were widely used -- protests, boycotts, mass rallies, sit-ins, marches, and militant confrontations with decision makers. A number of effective grassroots organizations emerged. The minority activists pointed out the deplorable conditions of city schools, run and staffed by members of the white middle class. As the minority populations in city schools began to outnumber the white, school policies remained unchanged and the educational needs of the poor and the minorities were left unmet. The assumed consensus between educators and the community was shown to be illusory.

The first broadly based challenge to school authorities by the public was the demand for school desegregation. When desegregation efforts initially were thwarted in northern cities, the point of challenge became community control of schools. The movement originated in New York City and spread to Washington, Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, Buffalo, Hartford, and other cities. Besides blacks, it mobilized other minorities and it threatened the educational establishment as nothing had before. The movement was founded on the premise that black and other minority children would always fail in schools where the main players, rule-makers, score keepers, and judges were white, middle class and elite people who had monopolized decisionmaking power.

Simply stated, the movement held that a school or cluster of schools in a public school district should be provided with substantial autonomy in matters of the budget, personnel, curriculum, with policymaking and decisionmaking authority delegated by the central board of education to a local board composed of parents and community residents.

The movement threatened most teacher and administrator organizations, state and Federal education agencies, and school board associations, all of whom opposed it. The concept was most fully developed in New York with the establishment of three experimental, community-controlled, demonstration districts. Backed with Ford Foundation support, the experiment produced extraordinary conflict and controversy and triggered the New York United Federation of Teachers strike in 1968. The test of the concept was dropped after less than two years and the next step in the school reform effort in New York was the passage at the state level of the New York City School Decentralization Act.

The well-publicized conflicts in New York City contributed heavily to the fading of the idea elsewhere. Although there was little hard evidence to support the judgment, people were convinced that the concept was bad and that the New York experiment had failed on all fronts. In other cities as well as in New York, interest in community control was followed by enactment of <u>administrative</u> or <u>political</u> decentralization of the school system. New York and Detroit were the only two cities to adopt <u>political</u> decentralization with some decisionmaking power shifted to local, elected community school boards. Elsewhere, <u>administrative</u> decentralization was enacted, sometimes accompanied by formation of subdistrict or building level advisory committees with limited power.

The struggle for community control of schools in the 1960's was one feature of the social turmoil which contributed to the development of a participatory climate, in which citizen involvement was seen as legitimate and in which the

public right to challenge the assumptions and practices of educators was accepted. This climate was also created by the "maximum feasible participation" policies of the Federal government during the 1960's, which required the formation of building-level or districtwide policy boards to implement and oversee the local operation of an aid program. An unexpected and profoundly influential source of legitimacy for citizen participation in schools has been the courts. Mandates for citizen involvement in the planning, implementation and monitoring of school desegregation plans have been handed down in orders both from Federal and state courts.

The controversies of the 1960's have subsided, leaving unsolved most of the issues underlying public unrest and activism. One important legacy of that period is the legitimacy of public involvement in schools, which is reflected in an array of state and local policies for school councils at building and school district level. It is within this context that citizens are responding to new concerns about declining enrollments, fiscal squeezes, and dropping test scores.

This general political background helps to explain the emergence of councils. The councils we are considering in this report have been formed by local school boards at their own initiative or to comply with court orders or Federal and State laws. Some councils receive a specific mandate with their authorization; others are given few specific significant tasks.

The national picture of formally authorized local school councils mandated by State law shows a concentration and a scattering of activity. Florida and California have moved the farthest and the fastest toward establishing a statewide structure of school district advisory councils. South Carolina has appeared new on the scene with a similar objective this year.

In 1973 the Florida legislature mandated school advisory councils -- either

at the district or at the building level -- with the specific purpose of participating in the preparation of an annual report of school district progress.[8] In California, requirements for school advisory committees are linked with 1972 legislation for the Early Childhood Education program. Recommendations for program implementation state that an advisory committee must be involved in the initial planning of the early childhood education program at each school. Thereafter, the committee will participate in the implementation, evaluation, and modification of the program developed.[9]

South Carolina is the most recent state to pass a law mandating local school advisory councils.[10] At least two parents and in schools with a ninth grade or above, two students, must be elected by their respective constituencies to serve on the local committees. According to that state's law, school principals may appoint sufficient additional members to the building level committees to outweigh parent and student strength. In South Carolina the preparation of the annual report is defined as the prime focus on council activity, although additional duties may be assigned council members by local school boards. These councils must be formed in all schools no later than January 1978.

The interest and financial support of national foundations has also contributed to the development of the school council idea. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation had made grants to support the concept. Particularly notable is the Mott-funded "Project SNAP," which provides direct financial support to local councils. The Rockefeller Foundation has invested more than $4 million in school council projects in several cities including Los Angeles, New Orleans, Oakland, Memphis, Miami, Minneapolis, and Newark. Foundation statements about these projects stress two purposes: developing minority leadership in and through the councils, and councils as mechanisms for broad community development. There is not yet any specific evidence about the results of these council improvement projects.

Our own observations and the recent literature suggest that there is a slow but steady growth of councils in many major cities. However, some setbacks have occurred in the council movement. For example, in Louisville, Kentucky, once thriving Neighborhood School Boards were dismantled when the city school system was consolidated with the Jefferson County School District.

Local school councils have also appeared as a result of Federal court orders for school desegregation. The Boston desegregation order of October 4, 1974 includes the most extensive mandate: each of the 156 public schools is required to establish a Racial-Ethnic Parent Council (REPC) consisting of black and white parents with appropriate representation of other minority citizens in schools with especially diverse minority student populations.[11] A number of court ordered desegregation plans across the country since 1971 have included provisions for a citizen advisory committee. Yet no other city's plan replicates the more pervasive, multi-tiered structure of councils at the school, district, and citywide level as in Boston.

The powers of school councils depend in part on their legal authorization, but also on provisions for State, local or Federal government to supervise their implementation and support their operation. For those councils established by Federal and State legislation, the mandate for their existence has the force of law. Our studies have shown that the trappings of citizen participation in Federal councils have been adopted by State and local officials, while the substantive role of council participation has been abandoned. We have noted that school systems seem careful to isolate Federally mandated councils, sometimes limiting member contact with other school groups.

By and large the most positive role which the Federal government has played with respect to local school advisory councils has been to legitmize the concept of citizen participation. Title I Parent Advisory Committees furnish the model for most State-mandated participatory bodies.

In the past the majority of local councils were formed at the behest of school officials to develop public support for administrators or school board members' programs. Members of such advisory committees were most often from the middle class. They were the community's civic leaders and share important policy perspectives and values with school officials. The committees typically were appointed for brief terms and were said to be representatives of district-wide interests. These advisory committees also were single-issue oriented.

Improving public relations best characterizes the traditional emphasis of these committees and their tasks. They flourished in the 1950's as school districts rapidly strove to meet the needs of expanding student populations with building programs, curriculum reforms, and standardization of staff qualifications. The political climate of the post-war years also account for the large number of school advisory bodies. Administrators and school board members found it advantageous to employ an advisory committee of liberal and moderate community leaders to present their points of view to a skeptical public and head off the charges of disloyalty on the part of educators that were common in that period.

By and large such citizen committees worked quite effectively, ushering bond issues through the electoral labyrinth and seeing to the adoption and public acceptance of school officials' policies. It is particularly significant that these blue-ribbon appointed committees were relied on less often in the cities that in the burgeoning middle class suburbs.

Advisory councils now are long-term and multi-issue bodies, ostensibly composed of persons representing a variety of interests and social and economic backgrounds. They operate most often at the school building level and not on a districtwide basis. To a degree they signify an awareness among school officials of a diverse educational constituency -- which at least may challenge

school policies if it does not actually have the means to move them significantly in any one direction.

The councils established in four cities exhibit the formal features of the 1970's model advisory committee. In Flint, Michigan, while allowing that the ultimate authorities in school affairs are the local Board of Education, its staff and State laws, the local mandate for councils maintains that "the councils can and should play an important role as an advisory group in the programs, policies, activities, and functions of the school."[12] In Los Angeles, the school-community advisory councils "shall participate in decisionmaking by advising the principals in matters pertaining to the local school and its educational program." The official authorization defines advising to mean: (1) inquiring; (2) informing; (3) suggesting; (4) recommending; and (5) evaluating.[13]

Building level advisory committees in Portland, Oregon "shall have the power to make recommendations, to establish policy at the building level when such policies are not in conflict with district policy or laws which govern school operation."[14] Along the same lines, but with a clearer distinction between advising and policymaking functions, the Anaheim, California ordinance explains that activity and discussion of councils in that city "shall be confined to the compilation of data, the analysis of problems, the summarization of opinions, and to the drawing of conclusions. These activities shall take place without the formulation of specific recommendations or invading in any other way the proper legal role of the school committee and/or the responsibilities of the superintendent of schools."[15]

In the following section we examine how these kinds of mandates are put into practice in a variety of ways.

SECTION III

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP, STRUCTURE AND AUTHORITY

Numbers of Participants

The current statistics of council participation are surprising and impressive. Although we know that many councils exist on paper only and that membership lists are often inflated and inaccurate, we estimate that there are now about 1,200,000 non-professional members of various school councils and education advisory committees throughout the country at the local district or school level.

There are more Title I Parent Advisory Committees than any other form of organization -- an estimated 14,000 district level PAC's and 44,000 building level committees with 900,000 members. Head Start and Follow Through boards and councils involve about 40,000 persons. Scores of other Federal education programs requiring district or building committees account for approximately 150,000 participants.

In Florida and California about 20,000 persons are listed as members of county, district, or site councils because of state legislation mandating citizen participation. A number of other states have mandated advisory mechanisms in the past few years and many urban districts have established councils by school board initiative. At best count, these diverse local and state mandated groups involve about 75,000 citizens.

Nearly all of these councils have been created since 1970. This tally of membership is drawn from multiple sources of data -- many are highly suspect and all incomplete.[16] There is a similar gap in national baseline data on council members' characteristics, social background and selection.

At least three factors may account for this information gap. First, few local schools or even school districts keep accurate records on participants.

Second, to date there have been no attempts nationally, by either governmental, professional or citizen-interest groups to capture this information. Finally, in many schools and districts the council mechanisms are, by definition, an open-ended process; many councils experience moderate to high turnover within a school year and from year to year. However, by drawing on data from relatively well-kept records, on observations and impressions of our staff, and on impressions of other observers, we can make some informed judgments on councils' performance and functions.

Method of Selection

Members gain seats on councils by selection, election, or volunteering. Many councils appear to use a combination of these methods. Most Federally-mandated councils are elected. The dominant mode for state- and locally-initiated groups is selection by the principal or sometimes the superintendent and school board. A survey of a random sample of Florida's council members in 1974 indicated that 85 percent were appointed.[17] Boston's court order requires election and other cities such as San Diego and Los Angeles also provide for community elections for council seats.

Representation

Community Representation. A complex problem for council operation is the representativeness (or lack of it) of members. Perceptions of councils on this point vary widely: members frequently see themselves as reflecting the immediate school community while outsiders do not. Most data suggest that councils are unrepresentative of at least one (and perhaps all) of the following groups: (1) community members other than parents; (2) minorities; (3) low income parents/citizens; (4) students; and (5) males (except in leadership positions).

Almost all school councils for which we have data require that a majority

of council members be parents of children in the school. In fact, parent representation tends to be much greater. In 1976 in Miami, parents composed 74 percent of elementary councils, 51 percent of junior high councils, and 63 percent of senior high councils.[18] In the Urban/Rural Development programs, parents averaged 82 percent of the membership.[19] A 1974 I.R.E. survey of selected school districts found that on local school policy councils, parents comprised 90 percent of the council with other citizens averaging five percent.[20]

Minority Representation. Although there is little concrete evidence of minority underrepresentation, most impressions suggest that the problem is severe. Where minorities are represented on councils, blacks appear most often. Non-English speaking citizens are seldom represented. A 1975-76 survey of the Miami-Dade School Councils showed the extent of council members' sense of the problem:

> While over 50 percent of respondents felt the committees were broadly representative, 35 percent at the elementary level, 28 percent at the junior high level and 44 percent at the senior high level felt there should be more black participation. Thirty nine percent at the elementary level, 38 percent at the junior high level, and 50 percent at the senior high level felt the need for more Hispanic American participation.[21]

This point was also raised in a report by Boston's Citywide Coordinating Committee appointed by Federal District Court Judge W. Arthur Garrity:

> Neither black nor white parents have been able to reach out to Asian, Hispanic, and other minority parents. While the language barrier is often mentioned as a reason, English speaking parents are quick to explain away the absence of Asian and Hispanic parents by citing cultural differences.[22]

This Boston report also points to a related problem -- a high attrition rate among minority council members. Commenting on the decline in minority participation each year, the report noted that too few white parents were willing to take the initiative to support black parents or grapple with the issue of racism. A Senate report on School Advisory Committees in Florida

suggested that "perhaps it was not a lack of interest but a feeling of frustration due to an inability to communicate that led to withdrawal" of minority members.[23]

Low-Income Representation. The 1974 report to the Florida Senate directly comments on this problem:

> Several "blue collar" workers felt that they were looked down on by their better educated colleagues...in light of the fact that 50 percent of the committee members who responded were college graduates, the danger of highly educated professionals ending up talking to themselves is real. The question of whether the laborer's perceptions were founded on fact or fiction is moot. The point is that school advisory committees must recognize and actively accomodate divergent perspectives if they are to maintain their credibility as channels for communication for the public.[24]

Other evidence points to low-income underrepresentation. The Boston's Citywide Coordinating Committee report pointed out that the transportation and childcare expenses incurred by low-income parents who wished to be active often prohibited participation.

> The only reimbursable expense at this time is mileage at the rate of ten cents per mile. Most parents do not have cars and during evening hours they must use either public transportation or taxis. The expenses they incur far exceed the reimbursement they receive. Childcare expenses are not reimbursable. For many parents -- particularly minority parents -- participation is a luxury they cannot afford.[25]

The overall picture of low-income and minority participation in councils is not bright. However, scattered across the country are many examples of school councils have have drawn poor and minority people into the school and which have opened up good channels of communication between the school and community. These councils have increased the understanding and support of the community for the school. In such schools the success can often be traced to a dynamic, community-oriented principal.[26]

Student Representation. As a rule most councils do not have student representatives. Frequently absence of students stems from the council guidelines.

Even where students are included as members, councils fail to retain student involvement. Dade County has experienced this problem and does not yet have a remedy. Where students have been assigned a bona fide role, evidence suggests that their contributions have been important. At least two students are appointed annually in San Diego and our impression is that many council members believe that secondary school students have made valuable contributions.[27] In the Urban/Rural Development program, a total of 119 students served on 18 school community councils representing grade levels from 4 to 12. In other isolated instances such as the Roosevelt School in Louisville, the Cluster School and Alternative Public School in Cambridge, Mass., and the Southeast Alternative in Minneapolis, students have played substantive roles on councils. In fact, both at the Cluster School and at the Southeast Free School, councils have had student chairpersons.

Male Representation. Generally we find that women substantially outnumber men on advisory councils. Although in several communities (San Diego, Dade County, and Los Angeles) it has been found that citizen advisory committees as opposed to PTA's create greater interest and involvement on the part of men, males remain in the minority. Variations appear in the Federally-funded Urban/Rural Development Program, where the mean for males on urban councils was 19 percent but 53 percent in rural sites.[28] Data from Los Angeles show that men held a majority of chairperson positions although there were many more women active as council members.[29]

Meetings

School board policies or administrative guidelines generally establish the number of times a council meets during the year. A survey by the National School Public Relations Association, as well as information from Portland,

Los Angeles, Miami, and Boston, provide strong evidence that all but a handful of councils meet only once per month.[30] In Boston, our observations and conversations with council members suggest that monthly meetings allow insufficient time to handle required work and allow no time for establishing the councils' own issue agendas. Scheduling is a problem. Infrequent meetings can permit school administrators to make important decisions without council input. While councils may have subcommittees that meet more frequently, there is little evidence that this happens. Our impression is that many council participants believe that more frequent meetings and an effective system of subcommittees are needed for councils to involve more people and to function more effectively.

Turnover

In city after city there are indications (but little hard data) that councils are not very stable bodies. Those known as "professional parents" have some permanence, but high turnover rates (estimated from 25 to 50 percent) apply to the most active as well as the nominal members. The most active members frequently tend to "burn themselves out," engaging in a substantial amount of important but generally frustrating, low-result activity. The retiring chairman of a San Diego Council commented: "you couldn't pay these people (chairpersons) to be on a council for another year."[31] Nominal members seem to sense the relatively low influence and importance of councils, miss meetings, and eventually drop off. High turnover is seen by participants as a critical problem for councils. Valuable experiences learned by trial and error are seldom passed on by those leaving. Councils then, are composed of many new members who are likely to repeat many of the same mistakes year after year.

Scope of Councils' Authority

In this section we will focus on the actual extent of councils' authority. As noted in the introductory section, involvement is not the same as participation. The latter refers to the impact of citizens' actions. By scope, we mean the extent of council members' decision and policymaking powers. We do not mean the number of issues areas of activities in which councils are involved. These will be taken up in the subsequent discussion of councils' functions and activities.

Councils are typically mandated to have advisory powers and responsibilities. The term "advisory" as spelled out in most mandates is open to an almost infinite number of interpretations. This ambiguity may account for a great deal of professional educators' hostility or indifference toward councils. The ambiguity also makes possible the manipulation and domination of councils by those professionals. We will argue later that these attitudes are large obstacles to council effectiveness.

For now, however, it is important to note the ambiguity of the term "advisory." That term can and has been made to mean three very different modes of citizen participation: token, advisory, and control-sharing. These are our terms but they represent in summary form Sherry Arnstein's eight rung "ladder of participation," discussed briefly earlier. Bearing in mind that these are abstract models, we can define each as follows:

Token: This corresponds to the bottom rungs of Arnstein's ladder: "therapy" and "manipulation." A council is controlled by the administrator and is used primarily to serve the ends of the school administration, not council members or parents. Few of the councils' activities are focused on improving the knowledge, understanding or capabilities of members. There is no transfer of power to the council.

Advisory: Although the label "advisory" can apply to groups that run the full range of Arnstein's typology, we are using the term specifically to identify a mode of participation which is continuing rather than sporadic and which provides a formal channel for review and recommendations. Advisory councils can select activities within limits and arrange them in priority on their agenda. Council activity serves ends and goals determined by the council and the council has the power and resources to see that there is a reasonable chance that the advice it gives may be acted on.

Partnership/Shared Decisionmaking: This is participation as we understand it. It corresponds to the upper reaches of Arnstein's typology. In this model the council can select and arrange in priority order the issues it will focus on. On a substantial number of issues, the council has the authority to make the final decision or see that the final decisionmaker acts as it directs. Still, the council may not infringe on the authority delegated by law to a local school board. It also must work in conformity with State and Federal education laws.

These distinctions will be illustrated below. Examples are taken directly from observations by IRE field researchers and indirectly from the literature.

Token Involvement. Three different modes of token involvement can be distinguished: rubber stamp, shock absorber, and public relations. Principals or administrators are the prime determinants of which mode will apply to "their" council.

Rubber stamp involvement occurs when the administration presents recommendations to a council which is fully expected to adopt or approve them.

Shock absorber involvement describes a situation where either a school board or administrator chooses to avoid the responsibility for decisionmaking roles in a critical situation. Instead, a group of people is chosen to get out in front on the issue and take the first wave of "flak." For example, in both

Flint, Michigan and Los Angeles, the Board of Education has used school councils to provide a buffer on controversial decisions about desegregation.

Public relations involvement does not have a specific focus characteristic of the rubber stamp and shock absorber types. The public relations model is much broader -- a more general way of influencing citizen involvement in councils and it seems to be the most prevalent.

Dale Mann describes the characteristics of this form of involvement: "The manipulative version of the public relations model concentrates on one-way communications, selectively stresses support, assigns citizens a passive and dependent consumer role, and preserves the autonomy of professionals. Citizen involvement, regardless of the intent with which it is offered, is acceptable only if it is support and even then it is carefully restricted to trivial and tangential concerns."[32]

Perhaps the most serious consequence attached to the manipulative version of the public relations mode is the debilitating effect on the public. When citizen interaction is viewed as manipulative public relations, the educator's conception of the citizen's proper role is one of simple, uncritical support.

Fantini points out that this manipulative view has a basic flaw: "When a school system is dysfunctional, the community is acting against its own interests and those of its children in maintaining the system, in failing to criticize it. In short, the existing concept of parent and community participation in education is basically misdirected toward supporting the school's status quo."[33]

Summing up what happens under this public relations mode, Mann says, "Finally, since under the public relations model the most ever expected of people is that they should maintain a supportive opinion about schools, when something more than mere opinion is required, fewer people are equipped for serious participation than might otherwise be the case. After decades of having

left education to educators, it should come as no surprise that people in cities have as little experience in decisionmaking about educational affairs as they do. As long as all one is ever asked for is support, civic abilities atrophy and are not available in those times of crisis when they are most needed."[34] Our perception that this is the dominant style of council operation is thus reinforced by other observers of the council phenomenon.

Advisory Participation. Our definition of the advisory role refers to a process where councils make some input or give some advice, though the final authority to act inevitably rests elsewhere.

The largest vacuum in data exists here because we have little information on the quantity and quality of advice and the extent to which the advice influences those with authority to act. There is, however, some evidence of transition from token to advisory involvement and dissatisfaction with tightly controlled advisory status. The 1975-76 evaluation report of Dade County indicates that the major impact of advisory committees is a result of the opportunities presented to committees: (1) to increase communication between lay and professional people and (2) to give citizens the opportunity to learn about developments in the schools. Among the trends noted in the report were: 89 percent of parents and advisory committees (including many who had been members of PTA, school volunteers, etc.) saw advisory committees as a unique opportunity for involvement; advisory committees have begun to shift their interest more to such fields as curriculum and discipline.[35]

Councils have not always been successful in their efforts to develop into influential boards. On June 28, 1971, the Board of Education for the Los Angeles Unified School District adopted Board Rule 1370 which established policy regarding school community advisory councils. The policy included the following provisions: the councils were to be strictly advisory in nature and the majority

of their functions were to be confined to the school and its educational program. This position was challenged by the San Fernando Valley Education Council which had not been content with a merely advisory role, but wanted real authority in educational decisionmaking. Council members maintained that principals had too much influence in making policy at the local school level. More than a year later the Los Angeles Board of Education finally voted in favor of the principals with the provision that at least 51 percent of each council's membership would be elected from parents of pupils attending the local school.[36]

Councils which more precisely fit our description of advisory bodies are often found in alternative schools such as the Southeast Alternative in Minneapolis. Such programs within the public school systems offer a unique combination of a progressive principal committed to community participation and an active, organized community with a relatively clear sense of how and why it wants to participate.

Some Title I Parent Advisory Committees also, in fact, are genuine and working examples of the advisory model. We have identified Title I PAC's, both district and school site level, which have had direct impact on Title I personnel selection, budget priorities, and program priorities. Similarly, some of the citizen advisory committees created by the courts in desegregating cities have demonstrated an effective advisory role. The Citywide Parents Advisory Council in Boston and The Community Education Council in Denver are examples.[37]

Partnership/Shared Decision Making. It is our best judgment that there are no more than a handful of councils in the country which have the authority to make a final decision or see that a final decisionmaker follows its directives.

Foremost among the schools and programs with this type of involvement are the Urban/Rural Development Program, the Southeast Free School in Minneapolis, Roosevelt School in Louisville, Build Academy of Buffalo, the Sand Everywhere

School in Hartford, the Alternative Public School in Cambridge, Mass., and the Morgan School in Washington, D.C. Substantial citizen involvement in the schools and programs is stated in school policy and practiced on a day-to-day basis.

The 1977 by-laws of Roosevelt Community School, Inc., Louisville, Kentucky for example, included the following powers for the citizen's governing board members:

a. Determine the types of programs or services the local school will operate.

b. Establish the broad general policies which will govern the operation of the school (truancy, absences, teacher orientation, etc.).

c. Assist in program planning and evaluation of the school program.

d. Be responsible for input in overall school affairs.

e. To insure that people in the school community have opportunities to express their needs and desires to the school administration and that their thinking is considered in the development of the school program.

f. To investigate and make recommendations regarding any existing programs within the school.

g. Establish priorities for use of funds allocated from the general budget or the Jefferson County Board of Education based on student enrollment or membership.

h. Establish priorities for use of various federal funds allocated through the Jefferson County Board of Education (Title I, Title II, etc.).

i. To interview and recommend the hiring of all personnel working at Roosevelt.

j. To evaluate all personnel working at Roosevelt.

k. To formulate experimental educational programs for all age groups in the community and seek federal, state, local, and private funding for same.

First hand observations by I.R.E. field researchers confirm that board members do indeed exercise these powers.

While the evidence is fragmentary it is revealing. The general pattern is much token involvement, little real advice and even fewer instances of partner-

ship -- little participation as we have defined it. This becomes even clearer in the following section which focuses on the councils' activities. Councils, it will be seen, are involved in many issue areas. They do not work primarily either as advisory or as policy-sharing bodies, but rather as service organizations.

SECTION IV

WHAT DO THEY DO: COUNCIL FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

In this section we focus on what councils do rather than on their authority and structure. The following survey of council activities reinforces the impression that much council activity takes the form of token involvement. However, it also suggests the potential for councils as participatory institutions.

It is important to note that local school board policies invariably define the activities of school councils, but typically in general and ambiguous terms. They also establish the limits and constraints within which councils must operate. The most permissive policies encourage councils to conduct independent studies of school problems and to draw conclusions for presentation to the school board. The more restrictive policies make it clear that councils can do little for fear of them encroaching on the authority of duly constituted school authorities.

The activities of school councils in general can be divided into two categories: school-related issues and council-related issues. The projects of councils may be considered in light of this dichotomy whether they are those established by the policy mandate or those actually undertaken by the committee.

This allows us to see the degree to which councils have the potential either to fulfill or go beyond their formal mandates. It also allows us to see how council activities are shaped and limited by such determining factors as the particular attitudes and behavior of the school building principals who put into practice school board policies. This division allows us to develop a sense of councils' effectiveness through their actual activities in contrast to the level of influence expected by the public. These expectations have been revealed in a recent Gallup poll on attitudes toward schools. This dif-

ference between the presumed and actual roles of councils can be seen if their activities are also grouped into further subcategories within these larger divisions:

Activity on School Related Issues	Activity on Council Related Issues
1. Critical organizational issues (Budget, personnel, curriculum/ program)	1. Council organization and structure (Membership, by-laws, meetings, etc.)
2. Planning and evaluation issues (Information acquisition, needs assessment, goal setting, evaluation, etc.)	2. Council resources and support (Staff, funds, workshops, etc.)
3. School climate (Discipline, rights and responsibilities, building conditions, etc.)	
4. Extra educational issues (Transportation and safety, extracurricular, field trips)	
5. School/community relations (Communications, public relations, fund raising)	

Critical Organizational Issues. Budget, personnel and curriculum/program issues all play a critical role in the function of the school. Piecing together information from various surveys (Flint, Florida, Los Angeles) and our own interviews, we conclude that most councils lack the power to address the most substantive policy decisions: selection and evaluation of the principal and staff, setting budget priorities, reviewing and approving the budget, approving new school programs, and reviewing and assessing the curriculum. Principals are genuinely concerned about minimizing participation in areas traditionally considered subject to management prerogative.[38]

There are virtually no council guidelines that specify substantive council participation in these issues. It appears that alternative schools within the

public systems and isolated schools with a uniquely cooperative relationship between principal and community are the most likely places for involvement in substantive policy issues to develop.

Planning and Evaluation. Needs assessment, goal setting, evaluation, and information acquisition together constitute the most common activities of councils. Such activities are commonly specified in the guidelines for councils. Administrators appear willing to support this type of involvement.

All of these council activities fall under the heading of comprehensive planning. Councils have covered a wide field as planning groups, i.e. planning for desegregation in Flint to long range school district planning in Portland, to planning for adjustments to declining enrollments. As a rule, planning becomes an issue for council action only when someone, usually an administrator, sees or anticipates an impending crisis. Councils seem unlikely to place a high priority on anticipating the future, especially since they often lack the data to project needs and problems. Attention focuses almost exclusively on immediate and short-term issues.

Councils in numerous cities and counties (Miami, Fla.; Lansing, Mich.; Los Angeles; Chicago; Portland, Ore.; Richland County, S.C.; Columbus, O.; Flint, Mich.) at some time have been involved in one or more of substantive policy decisions. From experiences in these cities and elsewhere, several problems with such involvement can be identified:

- It is often not clear how the results of council activity will be used by officials. Frequently it is clear they will be used by administrators alone. This contributes to the image of the councils being "used" as opposed to being in partnership.
- Instruments used in technical tasks vary widely and usually lack citizen input. Further, councils are frequently not adequately prepared to use instruments. In many cases instruments are not used at all and subjective judgments are relied on.

- Professional staff frequently dominate the process from start to finish.
- It is not uncommon for councils to "rubber stamp" results desired by administrators.

School Climate. Desegregation, decentralization, discipline, student rights and responsibilities, and building conditions are some of the major school climate issues councils have addressed. Councils in Flint and Boston have played very different roles as those cities have been desegregating their schools. In Flint, local councils appeared before the board of education to make suggestions for the plan to be submitted to HEW. Impressionistic observations indicate councils were, in the long run, used to endorse the administrators' plan. Boston REPC's play an absolutely essential role monitoring desegregation at the local school level: some of them appear to have become quite effective (the role of the REPC's in Boston is discussed in a following section).

Extra-educational Issues. Discipline and student rights and responsibilities are frequently seen as prominent issues by both school and community members of councils and they frequently appear in guidelines as appropriate topics on which councils will assist policy makers (Dade County, Lansing, Portland, Richland County, SC). In Los Angeles, 60 percent of all councils paid from "some" to "much" attention to developing policies affecting welfare of pupils (e.g. discipline).[39] In Dade County, "discipline" was a major issue discussed by 44 percent of elementary councils and 50 percent of the junior high councils and 66 percent of the senior high councils.[40]

Building conditions, it would appear, is another area of policy making where council involvement can contribute to administrative decisions. As a result, it is encouraged by principals. If councils take an active interest they may be more effective than principals in getting minor and even major

structural renovations. In the case of new school buildings, the "charrette process" for involving local communities in planning for the new building has been attempted in a few communities. This is one of the most frequent ways of involving councils in substantive issues relating to the climate of a new school even if their input on educational matters is less often sought.

The extra-educational issues, such as after school building use, student transportation to and from school, safety, and extra-curricular activities, are areas where there is a high probability of council involvement.[41]

Impressionistic observations indicate that administrators frequently do not want to spend large amounts of time on these housekeeping and logistical issues. Given the policymaking limitations otherwise placed on councils, it is not surprising that there is moderate to high interest among members around some of these issues.

School/Community Relations. Principals have a high interest in council involvement in developing support for the school in the community, communicating with the community, advising staff about the community. But community representatives are becoming increasingly restive with this role. Council members view themselves as representatives of the community and not school-to-community communicators and support builders as administrators see them.[42] Data from Dade County and Los Angeles suggest that the general issue of community relations is discussed frequently. In Dade County it is discussed by 76 percent of the elementary councils, 50 percent of the junior high councils, and 90 percent of the senior high councils. In Los Angeles, "mobilizing public support for the schools" is discussed by 84 percent of the councils and "orienting and advising school staff regarding conditions in the community" is discussed by 79 percent of the councils.

Reliable information suggests that principals play the primary role in

initiating involvement in these issues, because they want the community to feel that all is well with the school and because they want an "early warning system" for school-related problems as they start brewing in the community.[43] Councils generally view acting in such a role as primarily of value only to the principal and of little importance for them. It would appear that although school-community relations may be discussed frequently, little action is taken to develop them by community members of councils.

There is relatively little to be said about school service issues (such as volunteering, field trips, fund raising) because most councils simply have not been defined as service mechanisms. Volunteering is frequently handled either administratively or by a separate volunteer program in the school system. In many places the PTA is still looked upon as the primary service organization assisting teachers on field trips and raising funds through bake sales for scholarships or library books. In most places where councils and PTA's (or similar well established organizations) co-exist, school systems seem to prefer having each group perform a distinct function -- one advisory and the other service oriented. There are, however, places like Flint, where councils work on school service issues such as fund raising for classroom materials and referral services, even though there are PTA's in Flint. Principals generally have a moderately high self-interest in having citizens involved in school service issues while citizens on councils seem to have a decreasing interest in these issues.

Council Related Issues. Council organization, structure, resources, and support constitute a separate arena for council action. Usually school board policies or guidelines suggest the general outline of a structure for council members, ethnic and geographic distribution of members, numbers of meetings per year, sample by-laws, etc. Where these do not exist, principals who choose to

set up councils usually set fairly specific parameters. It is not unusual for many councils to spend much of the early part of the year dealing with their own organizational and structural issues. Such intensive focusing on these issues creates the illusion that there is a formula to council success and the key to such effectiveness is internal structure.

The situation, in fact, is just the opposite. There is little evidence that formal by-laws, the determination of when a council will meet or a host of other trivial matters contributes to the effective functioning of councils. There is evidence that:

1. Most councils lack the effective leadership to quickly resolve essentially marginal internal housekeeping issues.

2. Some principals are willing to have councils spend inordinate amounts of time on minor organizational issues.

3. Time spent on these issues is time not spend on more important issues.

4. A curious pattern of action recurs with councils "reinventing the wheel" year after year over internal organizational issues.

Providing councils with resources and support unfortunately receives little attention other than "lip-service" from most administrators although there are signs that councils themselves are becoming more concerned about this problem. It is becoming increasingly clear to citizens and councils that, by and large, they are ill-equipped to take on many of their possible functions and responsibilities due to a lack of support. Councils are becoming increasingly interested in funds to cover their needs for postage; to purchase resources; to pay part-time staff (i.e. a parent coordinator); to run workshop and training programs; and to cultivate independent sources of information and resources. There is growing evidence that providing supports and resources to councils enhances their ability to function effectively. Community representation and participation was improved by the introduction of lay leadership training sessions for

each local advisory council in Los Angeles.[44] Unfortunately, the forms of school system commitment to council support seem to be either one-time training sessions or services heavily controlled by the administration (i.e. the assignment of central office staff as council resources in Lansing).

The data suggest an emerging pattern of councils involvement. There is a minimum of support and involvement in council related activities. This prevents them from developing the self-consciousness and independent expertise as citizens' institutions. Contrary to citizens' initial expectations there has been an emphasis on school-community relations; councils find themselves in the business of representing schools to the community and not vice versa. Councils mandated to be advisory, with the potential for evolving into shared policy-making activities are, in fact, evolving as service organizations. This can be seen most clearly in the following summary of Lansing, Michigan's experience with Community Involvement Committees.

A typical battery of council responsibilities drawn up in policy is presented below. By way of comparing what councils actually do within their boundaries of operation, we present a list of the activities in which some Lansing councils involved themselves during the 1973-1974 school year.[45] It is notable that the committees have been delegated no responsibility for initiating action on any issue. Moreover, mandated areas of council involvement do not seem to include participation in curriculum design and evaluation.

The list in the right-hand column highlights the "service" oriented activities of councils. The explanation for this pattern has to do with: (a) the role of principals in implementing and directing the activities of school building councils; and (b) principals' attitudes toward expectations of councils. These will be examined in the first part of the next section. This will be

followed by a discussion of other actors, i.e. school boards and traditional parent groups in the councils' environment.

Mandated Responsibilities of Council	Actual Activities 1973-74
1. Needs assessment - curriculum advisors	1. Involvement in planning each school budget
2. Budget considerations	2. Worked with senior citizens
3. Specially funded programs	3. Arranged for assisting in patroling school area
4. Discipline code	4. Organized hobby projects for Friday evenings--parents and teachers taught--carpenter shop, knitting, basketball, etc.
5. Testing	5. CIC visited academic interest center
6. Define problems or issues	6. Produced Christmas booklet
7. Set role as community information service	7. Helped with decisions on departmental study
8. Attendance and tardiness	8. Assisted with bucket brigade
9. Inspection and consideration of new materials and/or texts	9. Assisted in school site study
10. Physical plant	10. Assisted with resource people for multiethnic awareness
11. Extra curricular activities	11. Participated with community newsletter
12. Recruitment and membership of CIC	12. Involvement in community school evening program
13. Evaluation techniques	13. Scheduled discussion sessions on school safety
14. Safety	14. Worked on discipline code, State assessment
	15. Met with some school board members
	16. Assisted with reading concerns

SECTION V

THE ENVIRONMENT OF COUNCILS: PROBLEMS

Our survey of council activities shows significant gaps between expectations of mandates and citizens and the actual activities of councils. It was noted that this is the result of environmental forces shaping the implementation of these council mandates. In this section we will look at environmental forces in the expectations and relations with councils of: principals and school administrators; school boards; and other traditional parent groups.

Principals and School Administrators

On school building councils principals are often ex-officio members although not the chairpersons. Teachers make up from 5 to 15 percent of the membership of most councils.[46] These figures however do not reveal the extent of principals' influence. Lacking independent staffing and sources of information, councils seem to rely on principals for these resources. As we noted earlier most councils (except for the federally mandated groups) are filled by appointment or some combination of nomination and election. In each case principals hold important powers over appointment or nomination. Finally the high rate of turnover among council membership further enhances the influence of principals.

Consequently it is not surprising that in every situation we have examined the key person in councils operation is the principal. Dale Mann comments that:

> In involving communities, principals are responding to several needs; to keep the community informed; to build support for the school; to organize the school's friends and allies; and, to do those things in a way that will minimize interference with the professional's autonomy.[47]

In the same publication, another commentator notes:

> The sound administrator wants as much parent activity as he can thereafter channel it appropriately, knowing how to protect his staff, how to use the parents in the community, how to use the interplay to strengthen the school, and how to keep the reins of responsibility untangled.[48]

Although parameters for council functioning are set by school boards, principals have wide discretion in day-to-day activities. Usually principals use their delegated authority to firmly establish their dominance through subtle rather than bold tactics, and to limit the scope of council action.

In the past six to eight years there have been an increasing number of efforts to observe, study, and analyze the roles principals play with respect to influencing the issues with which councils deal.

One superintendent observed that the principal's role with regard to parent advisory groups is one of total control and placation. It is important for principals to hold the reins of the group so they won't go down the wrong path. His influence should be very evident since the success of the group will depend on him.[49] This view, that the principals should control the issues the council considers, is not uncommon.

In a speech before the 1975 annual meeting of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, several suggestions were made to help principals deal with school councils. The advice reflects conceiving of the principal's role in relating to councils as gatekeepers, leaders, manipulators and final decisionmakers. Some of the suggestions to the principals were:

1. Develop an attitude of acceptance.
2. Give firm definition of advisory role and what kind of tasks are in their domain. (The principal is the decisionmaker.)
3. Keep communication flow going; listen even if you don't agree.
4. Be willing to back ideas that they feel strongly about even if you're lukewarm, so that they'll be more understanding when you use veto power.
5. One positive contribution from the group will make the entire effort worthwhile.[50]

Thus principals are encouraged not only to decide what issues can or cannot be dealt with, but also they set priorities and veto outcomes of which they disapprove. Generally, principals do not expect much from councils.

A study of the perceptions of school administrators in Flint, Michigan towards school councils showed they felt that councils should be more involved in non-academic, i.e. extra curricular policies and less involved in such issues as personnel, curriculum, budget and in-service training.[51]

Another study of principals' behavior in 35 Los Angeles advisory councils shows that the existence of councils tends to deflect local demands from the school board and central administration to local school principals who then develop strategies to manipulate council members in order to avoid conflict. Principals in white, middle-class schools used fewer manipulative techniques than those in integrated schools where council members challenged the school and the principal.[52]

Both documented and impressionistic evidence indicates that most principals try to exercise substantial control over the council's agenda. As we noted earlier, there are some notable exceptions to this model.

As an administrative group, principals perceive school advisory councils to be of little or no value in the overall operation of the school's program.[53] Principals are generally perceived by the public to be the major reason for lack of citizen participation in schools.[54] A survey of principals in Los Angeles who do not yet have councils established at their schools, yielded the following information. The reasons for the slow pace of council formation were ranked in order in the following way:

1. Principal needs guidance in this area.
2. Too time consuming.

3. There are no real leaders in the community.
4. Night meetings will be a problem.
5. Insufficient support from staff.
6. Principal new to school.

Several other deterrants to council formation voiced by principals were the following: beliefs that councils might become pressure groups and community take-over of school might follow; public apathy; and principal belief that councils are not worthwhile.[55]

School Boards

The relationship of school boards to school councils are not well researched or documented.

Generally school boards seem not to see councils as very high priorities.

What we know of the situation indicates that professional educators rather than school board members take the initiative in proposing mechanisms for citizen participation such as councils. Professional educators develop policies and administrative guidelines in such a way that the administration becomes far more prominent in relating to councils than the school board. Councils come to the administration much more frequently for advice, information, and resources. They report to and feel responsible to the administration, and they thus seldom relate to school boards. School boards often get second hand information or very limited information about council activity in their district. This process of having the administration "launder" communication and information between school boards and school councils contributes to an unstable and confusing relationship.

It is no surprise that school board members are frequently heard making two or three observations regarding councils. First, there are fears that councils may, if unchecked, encroach on board prerogatives and responsibilities.

The second observation heard is that school board members fear that councils are nothing more than a political "farm system" which citizens use as a base for a future school board candidacy. Third, school boards do not see councils as "their baby". They have been established primarily by administrative initiative or because of state and federal mandate. School boards don't see how councils can be very helpful or constructive. They often know little about them.

Thus, it appears that the opportunity for a unique alliance between citizens at the board and council levels is realized in only a few rare situations. Given the continuing high level of public concern over the quality of education in the schools it is a little surprising that these two groups cannot identify their common interests and ways of interacting on different levels where they can be mutually supportive and reinforce the efforts of each other.

As the important processes of deciding on budget, personnel, programs, and union contracts become increasingly more complex and dependent on bureaucratic input, boards have the opportunity to strengthen their own position by consulting with and utilizing the resources of other concerned citizens involved in the schools through local school councils.

In our view, local councils could be quite useful to school boards. Citizens could provide the boards with valuable information from their first hand experiences in schools. The board members would therefore not have to rely exclusively on data provided by administrators for their decisions. Citizens could also monitor implementation of programs and policies and report back to the board, once again independently of school professionals. Finally, local council members could make decisions about certain problems in school buildings and relieve school boards from the need to address issues more speedily and appropriately handled by those with first hand experience of all factors in a

situation.

However, few school board members seem to recognize these possibilities. Confusion, resentment, and neglect continue to flourish. School boards seem content to let councils stumble along without clear guidance and support.

Traditional Parent Groups

Many of the same kind of misgivings are evident in councils' relations with other parent groups.

The present status of councils seems strongly influenced by widely held views of PTA's or PTSA's. A statement in the Minneapolis Citizen's Committee on Public Education report Citizen Participation in the Minneapolis Public Schools, states this view as follows:

> PTSA's may have suffered because of extensive school support. PTSA's maintain the structural outlines of democratic organization but fail to provide citizens with a useful wedge into educational policy making. In this sense, PTSA participation is not involvement in a democratic political process structured to win changes in the urban educational process; the PTSA is an example of an administratively controlled citizen participation process.

As described by a member of the Minneapolis PTSA Council:

> PTSA units in this district run the whole gamut. Some are barely existing, without presidents, while others are active and powerful. PTSA membership is declining in Minneapolis, in the state and in the nation. Some parent groups have dropped their PTSA affiliation. The problem is that without organizational structure, they may then drop out altogether. The 'S' in PTSA (students) was added two years ago, but it is limited. At this time there are no students on the city-wide PTA council. The teachers in PTSA have offered cooperation, but there has never been active teacher involvement. Maybe they feel that the work of the PTSA is irrelevant to them. The organization does not have an action image. It is thought of as a support group, a yes group (although constructive criticism may be offered).[56]

In some places, PTA seems to be undergoing metamorphsis. They are striving to be less of a yes group and more active in non-traditional ways. However, it appears that in cities where both PTA and councils exist, the PTA

has seen a diminishing in overall numbers and strength - although the units that remain for the most part seem to be stronger than they once were. The brief history of the existence of both councils and PTA's has seen relationships that run the gamut from the PTA's outright fighting the existence of councils to the two working side-by-side. In Florida, the state PTA played an aggressive role trying to fight legislation that set up councils. In Dade County, after an initially cool relationship for two or three years, the two groups now seem to be carving out separate turfs so that they can coexist and even support each other when necessary. At the local school level, there are cases where the PTA and council have merged efforts to have a single group at the school. On the other hand, in neighboring Broward County in Florida, the school administration seems to have played an influential role in maintaining a competitive relationship between councils and PTA's. It is not clear that either group has benefitted from this relationship to date.

In summary, PTA's have been and in some cases continue to be very threatened by the existence of new, legitimate, parent-oriented groups whose primary base is the local school. At least in the cities, their size and influence has diminished with councils picking up a substantial portion of influence and perhaps likely members, The short term trend in cities seems to be that strong. PTA's at local schools will survive, councils or not; weak PTA's will not survive. Where neither existed, councils are more likely to be the vehicle that comes into existence.

Lack of Help

As we will point out in the next section, councils need nurture. The first need always seems to be information. Citizens attempting to participate in school affairs often do not have the basic information they need, do not know

what is available or how to get it, or run afoul of school officials or education agencies that are unwilling to provide the information. Few professional groups, state and federal agencies, or local districts are either equipped to serve or interested in serving the information needs of citizen groups -- beyond the usual PR booklets and brochures. Much available material is written in excessively technical jargon; budget documents are typically voluminous and difficult to understand. The professionals control information and access to it.

Good information, generally available to the public, is absolutely essential to ensure that public discussion of school issues is an informed discussion. If power sharing means anything, it means increased public dialogue about central educational choices. Only when such discussion is based on sound and solid facts will the level of the debate and the quality of collaborative planning and decisionmaking be raised.

Citizens asked to perform new roles need help beyond information. They need training for specific skills, including communication and planning and gathering and analyzing data. They also need orientation to specific settings and tasks. In short, citizen participation, if it is to lead to less rather than more citizen frustration and alienation, needs nurture.

SECTION VI

MOVING TOWARD SHARING THE POWER

The recent mushrooming of multi-purpose, school level councils scattered across the country does not lend itself readily to structured analysis. Baseline data is sparse and limited to superficial features. The few efforts made to gather information on quality rather than quantity rely heavily on perceptions of participants.

Three council evaluation reports, one from Los Angeles, the other two from Boston, reveal problems and possibilities that were echoed and articulated by citizens that we have interviewed across the country.

Los Angeles

In its final report in June 1977 to the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Citizen Management Review Committee recommended that:

> Community Advisory Councils should be given increased advisory authority in the school to approve and evaluate programs and budgets and to join with professionals in assessing the performance of personnel.[57]

The review committee also proposed that:

> Having created the Advisory Councils as their link with the community, the Board and the District should utilize the link and avoid establishing competing committees to deal with district issues.[58]

Survey research data reported by the Review Committee noted that principals viewed themselves as being democratic in the operation of their advisory committees, but parents and teachers saw principals as playing a much more dominant role.

The report continued:

> Most respondents agreed that the CAC should be more involved in setting goals and priorities, in planning and evaluating the educational programs and in planning budget allocations, but fewer wanted more CAC involvement in personnel issues. The

> teachers and principals were concerned about excessive citizen participation in personnel matters and were more likely to view the CAC as divisive and not representative of the total community. Parents generally want significantly greater involvement in personnel, budget and program decisions than they currently have or than teachers and principals want them to have.[59]

Although most school personnel were found to support the activities of the CAC's in school governance, one principal noted that the "lack of involvement on the part of the CAC's may be 'due to their having no real responsibility over anything serious.'"

In this connection it was noted that:

> Councils in Title I schools are more successful than those in non-Title I schools. In schools with special programs, ECE, Title I, Gifted, and ESL, there are significantly defined tasks for CAC's, such as budget sign-off, program planning, and evaluation and recruitment of parent aides which serve to organize their activities, give them purpose and engage their members in meaningful roles.[60]

The most significant finding to the Los Angeles study was that CAC operation occurs outside the context to citywide, Board of Education policymaking:

> Community advisory council members were not satisfied with their role in influencing and evaluating District policy. Only rarely were such councils consulted on subjects pending before the Board of Education. Councils do not have information systematically brought to their attention nor are they regularly asked to advise the Board.[61]

Boston

The sudden and extensive involvement of parents in Boston is in many ways unique. However, the conclusions of the following reports reveal underlying and general features of the council experience. The first report found that:

- Parent involvement in the Boston schools through Racial-Ethnic Parent Councils is growing, yet councils have continuous needs in the following areas: access to current and relevant information; skill development and assistance in involving more parents; recruitment of minority participants; and technical, problem-solving assistance.

- Racial and ethnic differences and perceived difficulties making common cause with others of different background is a problem. Neigh-

borhoods are seen as insular and hostile places for outsiders and language barriers inhibit participation of Asian and Hispanic parents.

- Councils are elected by only part of a constituent parent body and conduct business in isolation. Councils are not as representative as they should be and speak for parents only in the most general ways.

- Council agendas are often determined by the School Department which diverts attention to administrative and bureaucratic issues.

- Leadership problems are often serious, with the most active parents assuming leadership roles with no support base of other parents; few efforts are made to develop leadership skills among new participants who fall by the wayside or catch on after fending for themselves. The problem of leadership isolates REPC's.

- Racial tensions and issues with racial outcomes define the context within which REPC's function; yet the issue of race rarely surfaces at meetings. It is a problem inherent in all Boston schools. Parents feel that the mere fact of white and black parents working together is likely to diminish racial tension. Though partly true, more direct work is needed to resolve racial problems.

- REPC's have yet to develop school level educational issues. There is little discussion about what is being taught and learned and who is learning it. Occasionally reading scores come up along with discipline issues for discussion. Greater emphasis on educational issues could well lead to greater participation since most parents become involved with schools because of concern for their children's education.[61]

The second report on Boston's school building level councils indicated that:

- Development of REPC's is uneven but shows an overall pattern of growth. The superintendent mandated council involvement on the development of all individual school educational plans and councils must sign off on all proposals for school funding requests.

- Accomplishments are varied: in some schools councils helped have plugs installed so non-functioning stoves could be used for hot lunch programs; in others, libraries have been stocked with books. Some buildings have been renovated or repainted. Some councils have inaugurated bilingual programs in schools. Newsletters have been developed and parent-teacher forums also have been run. Some councils sponsor social events with the Home and School Association (Boston's version of a PTA).

- Acquiring information is a serious problem for REPC's. Access to information is usually denied in one of three ways: a flat refusal to provide it; provision of incomplete or inaccurate information; or providing too much information.

- Principals may encourage only supportive parents to run for a council seat, with the result that many REPC's are "paper councils."
- Despite problems, the gains made by involving parents in education through councils have irreversibly set the School Department on a forward moving course.
- Parents refuse to accept School Department policy uncritically now, though parents' sophistication in school politics is still at an embryonic stage.
- New parent leadership is appearing daily. Most respected are parents who are dedicated, hardworking, and forthright. There is increasingly less room for opportunists and grand-standers.[63]

The Federal Experience

These findings are not surprising. They echo similar experiences in the Federally-mandated councils in the poverty programs of the mid-60's and in the subsequent Federal education programs.[64] At no point has there been coherent policy on participation across or within Federal departments or bureaus. Policies, programs, research and development efforts seem to follow separate tracks. Regulations or guidelines for participation are often ambiguous, frequently different or contradictory from one program to another, and inevitably confusing for those charged with implementation. No attention is given to problems of multiplicity of groups or duplication of efforts especially at the school level. Great attention is given to specifications for council membership; minimal, if any, to roles and responsibilities. Councils are often expected to function without financial provisions for staff support or technical assistance; without budget for operating costs; without procedures for monitoring or evaluation. A structure is created and expected to function virtually in a vacuum. The rhetoric of participation masks ambiguity of purposes as well as a poverty of means. Despite the wide variations in activities, the broad generalizations about Federal interventions are equally valid for more recent State and local efforts.

Caveats and Recommendations

This evidence reaffirms the old saw that good intentions do not always produce good results at the local level. Simple logic suggests that a few key operating principles--used separately or together--can undermine the quality of efforts to involve citizens even as quantity of involvement grows. The rules for failure are both simple and obvious:

- Kill the idea with kindness. Start up as many different kinds of citizen groups as possible, each with distinct memberships and mandates. Make sure they do not reflect any coherent or consistent policies across or within departments, agencies, or bureaus.
- Set the plan to work in a vacuum. Omit provisions for staff support, systematic information flow, operating budgets, or technical assistance.
- Concentrate on structures and ignore functions. Create new groups and focus attention on numbers: how many members, how often they meet, etc. Never clarify roles, rights, responsibilities. Give these groups no power.
- Set the stage for opposition and competition. Assume that the plan does not require support from professionals in the field or from previously established citizen groups.
- Never check on progress or evaluate. Never document the experience of thos in the field to inform future policies and, above all, never seriously examine opportunities for redistributing power and authority.

Consequently, from these analyses we have identified five important areas needing attention if local building level councils are to become effective vehicles for citizen participation. These recommendations are addressed to Federal, state, and local policy makers. Coherent and consistent policies on citizen participation are needed at all three levels--Federal, state, and local. Such policies cannot be developed at one level without consultation and coordination with each of the others. Furthermore, such policies and procedures have little chance of working if they are developed without major input from those most affected--namely local citizens.

The five areas of need are as follows:

1. Council Powers and Functions: Special attention should be given to decentralize power and decision-making so that appropriate decisions can be made at the building level. (See Section VII for further discussion of this point.)

Councils must have the opportunity to participate in decision-making in areas of local school budget, personnel, and program. For this participation to be viable, the council should participate in a partnership capacity. It is essential for councils to operate effectively in this capacity that principals have the administrative authority to parallel the council's policy-making authority.

2. Council Support Systems: In order to function effectively, councils must have resources to strengthen their governance as well as their ability to take action on specific problems.

The school system should provide the following support: council staffing, modest council budget, open access to school-related information, a parent resource center, clear procedures for the council to deal with the school in behalf of its constituents' grievances, workshops for skill development and leadership training, and prompt feedback on actions and recommendations taken by the council. The council itself should participate in informal networks of groups both within the school system and outside of it to strengthen its ability to act effectively. Finally, councils must try to develop more effective ways of communicating to the school community and the larger community. (See Section VII for further discussion of this point.)

3. Professional Educators Support System: Both teachers and principals must have access to opportunities to strengthen and refine their skills in working with parents in general and councils in particular.

Traditional one and two-day workshops grossly underestimate the complexity and nature of the skills needed to implement a viable council program. A multi-year staff development effort, including both intensive workshops and regular follow-up sessions begins to provide the kind of support system needed by teachers and administrators. On a day-to-day basis, principals' roles becomes enlarged in order to effectively assume the added responsibilities of working in a partnership capacity with the councils. There must be the corresponding day-to-day support to the principal from the school system for this to work.

4. Incentives for Coordination Rather than Fragmentation: In order to avoid competition and duplication of effort between councils and other parent groups at the same school, care must be given to enable councils and groups to integrate or coordinate their acitivities.

The language of Federal, state, and local legislation, guidelines, or mandates should specify that coordination, and/or merger, and/or federation of school site councils and other advisory committees or parent groups, is not prohibited and is encouraged. However, the most desirable and feasible ways to provide for coordination and linkages will vary greatly from school to school and district to district, and these should be developed at the school and district level. No single pattern can yet be identified which addresses the need for coordination everywhere. However, the following issues which reveal some of the inherent dilemmas, are important as aspects of the solutions sought by local people:

1. The special stake of students and parents in "target population" programs such as Title I or bilingual education must be specifically and adequately protected.

2. The common interests of all parent groups in planning and implementing school-wide policies and programs should be respected.

3. The principle of equal treatment for all parent groups should be affirmed and demonstrated in school policies and practices.

5. Council Membership and Representation: Councils should represent the school's parents, teachers, administration, students (where appropriate), and the larger community. Elections seem to be preferable to selection in terms of insuring council credibility.

Councils must be seen as representing some constitutency other than those represented by principals as revealed in their appointments. Great care must be given to representing the communities and the interests served by local schools. Experience has shown that unless substantial outreach efforts are made to involve poor and minority citizens, their representation will not be adequate.

A variety of election/selection schemes should be reviewed before determining the procedures most appropriate for local conditions. In this area, as in most specifics of operation, citizens must be partners in the creation of the design.

6. Documentation and Evaluation: In order for citizens, school systems, and policy makers to benefit mutually from the council experience, their functioning and activities need to be well documented and annually evaluated.

Traditionally little attention has been paid to either documentation or evaluation. As a result neither citizens, school systems, nor policy makers have been able to develop a rational process for refining and improving councils or making policy decisions.

Inevitably many school systems face a wide range of unanticipated problems in moving toward "partnership" participation for school councils. It is essential that there be a clear, well understood process for identifying and resolving both short-term and long-term problems that arise. A good data base of facts and results can contribute to such problem solving. Citizens, including council members, should be involved in planning and carrying out documentation and evaluation.

These needs can be met in different ways at different levels. Action is required by Federal and state policy-makers, local school boards and administrators, school-level administrators and councils, and citizen groups. All local and state groups should press the Federal policy makers to assure that Federal requirements do not overwhelm all others and in fact preempt all policy making. However, the existing Federal commitment to citizen participation should be maintained and strengthened. Coordinated policy planning, as rare and difficult as it may be, is the only hope out of the current thicket of ambiguous, overlapping, and counterproductive policies and practices.

In the final section we move from the immediate needs for councils effectiveness to broader issues that must also be addressed.

SECTION VII

PROSPECTS FOR PARTICIPATION: TWO BASIC POLICY ISSUES

Much of our focus until now has been on operational concerns. We see the recommendations in the previous section as practical and achievable if policy makers, citizens, and educators are motivated to move to correct many of the inadequacies in the current scene. But such short-term steps are not enough. Our analysis of the phenomenon of school councils opens up two fundamental issues that must also be addressed by policy makers. The first is governance -- relationship between the Federal, state, and local levels. The second is the relationships between the public and private sectors. We will deal only very briefly with these issues here in order that we can conclude this report with policy recommendations which seem to us to be central if school councils are in fact to realize their potential as mechanisms for citizen participation.

Governance

The governance issue in its broadest terms leads us to two key questions: What decisions are appropriate at what level? and who should be involved in making these decisions? At the heart of the issue are fundamental relationships among Federal, state, and local governments, and at the local level, between citywide and neighborhood forces; among legislative, executive, and judicial branches; and between public and private sectors. At the heart of the issue are also fundamental questions of the relationships between citizens and experts, professionals, and government officials.

Despite the fact that these issues have not been sharply posed and thoroughly examined, government policies and practices are constantly forging new and expedient answers to them. These answers are often simply patchwork adjustments.

At all levels the rhetoric of decentralization, like the rhetoric of participation, is strong -- getting the power back to the people. Yet just as citizen participation remains feeble, decentralization remains largely an unrealized slogan. We hear promises to build "partnerships" between Federal and state agencies and between state and local agencies; we hear municipal governments and school boards talking the language of dispersing power. But bureaucratic practices at all levels tends to subvert any real sharing of power and authority.

The tides are running strongly toward more, not less, centralization and bureaucracy in education. Federal and State governments are wielding more influence over the schools. At the local level the brief flurry of interest in decentralization following the community control controversies of the 1960's has subsided. The forces for recentralization are strong. The groups that have been traditionally opposed to decentralization remain so - teachers unions, administrator organizations, central school boards elected or appointed at-large, the traditional reform organizations such as PTA, and business and corporation interests.

This pressure is not currently being counteracted by any strong grassroots pressure. At present the demands from these communities and the resources that they potentially can offer have not been mobilized or articulated. Differences between the groups (e.g. black vs. Hispanic, working class white vs. black) work against the possibility of their making common cause in support of an issue such as decentralization.

In addition, there are various objective "systemic" forces for recentralization. Recentralization is occuring because of citywide collective bargaining, the bureaucratic needs of Federal programs such as Title I, and court-ordered desegregation plans (except for Boston where the plan was designed specifically to create the basis for decentralized decisionmaking).

The bureaucratic needs for standardized reporting and accountability create yet another, though perhaps unintentional, thrust for recentralization. Especially with respect to local participatory initiatives in curriculum innovation, these create so many "givens" which are not open to local decision-making.

Fiscal considerations and the ever-present urban budgetary crisis also act as forces for recentralization. Many educators and politicians accept the premise that decentralization and participatory experiments are too costly in terms of administrative overhead. We have no independent information on this issue. Moreover, costs and benefits are ultimately a value question (i.e., what is an acceptable price tag for the benefits of citizen participation?). However, we can expect that the perception or allegation of "too much administrative overhead" will be used by the traditional opponents of decentralization and citizen participation.

Fiscal considerations play yet another role in pressures for recentralization. The push towards egalitarianism and equitable school funding may work against local control of education. Such equitable funding plans typically call for either full or increased state funding for schools. Centralization of funding need not necessarily mean centralization of decision making. The school based management concept which is being put forward by some analysts, provides one mechanism for reconciling state funding with local participation.[65]

We believe that reversing the strong trend toward recentralization will only be possible through state and Federal intervention. Such intervention is likely only if there are strong new demands and resources evident from low-income, minority, and grassroots white ethnic communities. Federal and state funding policies and requirements for citizen influence can conceivably converge to support the incipient school based management concept, which has within it elements of both decentralization and citizen participation through strong school councils.

Strengthening citizen participation through school councils requires devolving authority for some major decision making to the school district and the local individual building. The concept of decentralization should not be oversimplified to mean that all decisions can and should be made at the building level. There are rights and responsibilities that are properly and necessarily exercised and Federal, state, district, and building levels. Careful analysis and tough minded negotiation is a requirement for developing a workable federated system.

Participation can be meaningful only where there are important policies to be developed and decisions to be made. Having school site councils as vehicles for citizen participation in a context in which most important decisions are made in Washington, the state capitol, or the central district office makes little sense. School site management -- more authority over budget, personnel, and program -- at the building level is a concept which is supportive of strong participation through councils.

However, neither school site management nor school councils should be considered out of context. For this reason, our primary recommendation is for a series of policy studies to precede and provide a solid base for state and Federal action. These studies need to include a thorough reexamination of Federal-State-Local interfaces which:

- specifies responsibilities for each branch with appropriate mechanisms for carrying them out.
- defines necessary communication links channeling information and recommendations not only downward through the system, but upward from the grassroots.
- identifies within each level the incentives for and constraints on processes of decentralization. This includes an examination of the intended and unintended consequences of administrative policy and practice related to elementary and secondary education.
- reviews processes for decentralization in light of roles and functions of citizen groups in decision-making processes at each level.

This policy recommendation is addressed specifically to Federal government because it transcends any individual State interest. All levels have an interest in its outcome and therefore should support such a study.

We recommend a moratorium on major new Federal or state legislative initiatives relating to citizen participation in the schools until the completion of such studies and thoughtful consideration by policy makers of their implications of their analyses. To continue to create new mechanisms without a more solid base than we now have is likely to do more harm than good to the cause of citizen participation and the reformation of school governance.

However, in the one or two years required for the needed policy studies, much important work can be done. First, it is vital to capitalize on the experience and perceptions of grassroots citizens and educators about school governance. Second, it is possible to evauate current modes of local school governance and pilot efforts at school site management using action research.[66] Third, advocates of citizen participation can begin to mobilize a broad base of citizen support for reform of school governance that moves toward both decentralization and shared power between educators and citizens. Voluntary citizen initiated organizations at the local and state levels will have to provide much of the leadership and energy in this process. The relationship of these citizen-initiated organizations to mandated groups is discussed in another context in the comments which follow on the issue of public and private sectors in citizen participation.

Public-Private Relationships

The second broad policy issue that deserves careful examination is the relationship between public and private sectors in citizen participation. This is a part of the larger national issues of growing predominance of the public sector over the private.

Over the past century the size and influence of the Federal government have grown enormously. Nearly everyone has felt its presence through laws, court decisions, new services and new commitments to people's rights. Since the end of World War II states also have centralized authority, enlarged their bureaucracies, and wielded greater influence over everyday matters. City governments, and especially school departments, also have evolved into large and bureaucratic institutions.

Bureaucratic centralization of authority is not a new phenomenon. From the latter part of the 19th century both the private and public sectors have been heavily influenced by strong movements toward "rational management" and "specialization." More efficient production and service delivery has sometimes been achieved. But in government and public institutions the officials in the managerial class often have lost touch with the people.

While the government grows and people express their frsutration with it, there has been a contradictory tendency. More than ever, the government is relied upon to protect individual and group interest. The "have nots" in the society have learned to turn for help primarily to the Federal authorities rather than to City Hall or to state capitols. While decrying Federal red tape and undue influence, many groups actively solicit Federal money and intervention in different ways: from disaster relief to national laws governing health care delivery.

Many of the voluntary associations that formerly served as effective mediating agents between individuals and governments have faded, for example. The function of the old-style political party as a mediator for immigrants, the urban poor, and working class people has been taken up by government agencies and government-funded projects of various kinds.

Public sector dominance has helped to erode the sense of community and the

strength of voluntary citizen-controlled activities. Hence, the sense of community, of fate-control, and of participation has been diminished for many people.

When this larger issue is narrowed to the topic of this report -- citizen participation in the schools -- we see enormous growth over the past 15 years in the influence of Federal and state governments. The mandated advisory council has come to dominate the scene. As we have seen, these councils by and large, have little power. In the cities especially, they have drawn members and resources away from citizen-initiated organizations. Many of these urban citizen-initiated groups did, in fact, have influence on school policies and practices in the late 60's and early 70's. So we hypothesize that the creation of mandated councils has, in many cities, produced a net loss of power for the urban poor and the demise or weakening of voluntary citizen groups concerned about school issues.

This is a vivid example of how government policies have unintended side effects and lead to the weakening of voluntary and citizen controlled associations. Another important example is that many citizen-initiated groups have become partly or largely dependent on state and Federal government funding for their survival. Legislation or guidelines determine priorities, schedules, products, and styles of work. Citizen groups are doing the work of and are working for government agencies rather than setting their own course and conrolling their own time and energy.

We see no easy solutions to the problem of the erosion of citizen-initiated activities in school decision making. But we urge that policy makers at local, state, and Federal levels start by addressing the issue, admitting the realities of the present situation, and developing sensible remedial plans.

There are two promising avenues for exploration that we feel confident about proposing at this time. First, we propose that both state and Federal governments develop new ways to provide tax support to voluntary, tax-exempt, non-profit, non-partisan citizen organizations in areas such as education that require no substantive government control. Two possibilities for doing this include (a) voluntary tax return check-offs to provide funds to be administered by a quasi-governmental agency for no-strings grants; and (b) creation of a quasi-governmental agency on the general model of the Legal Services Corporation to provide funds and technical assistance to citizen groups.

A second promising avenue for exploration leads to a division of labor. Citizen initiated organizations could take the lead in assessing the functions and activities that can best be played by citizen-initiated and mandated groups in carrying out their most appropriate functions more effectively. A parallel point is that local, state, and Federal governments should provide direct funding for councils so that councils can purchase the goods and services they need from citizen-initiated organizations and from other sources as well.

A project developed by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has provided some important insights into this process through ground-breaking efforts to fund approximately two hundred councils in several cities around the country. Project SNAP (Stimulating the Neighborhood Action Process) has demonstrated that providing funds to councils can produce significant results. Program Officer Dr. Norward Roussell developed the idea for this project which granted up to $5000 to councils primarily for the purpose of solving neighborhood problems. Councils in Duval County, Florida; Flint, Michigan; Independence, Missouri; and Minneapolis, Minnesota received grants under this project.

In these ways, citizen-initiated groups can become power resources for mandated groups. They can also provide the broad base of community and politi-

cal support that the mandated groups need in order to share power with educators.

The newly emerging concept of networking may be especially applicable to the development of mutually productive relationships between citizen initiated and mandated citizen groups.[67] Networking includes getting information, processing and disseminating it, but goes beyond these to encompass the sharing of resources, building moral support, and constructing temporary alliances for both political and apolitical ends. Most importantly, networking is an integral part of the decision-making process itself.

Informal communications systems strongly appeal to people and seem to be the means of getting reliable information and help which most people prefer over that available in bureaucracy and the mass media.

There may be more personal information networking among poor grassroots people than among suburban or other middle class populations because for them, informal flows of information and aid are a matter of survival. But it appears that the networks of minority people and the poor don't often link into public institutions or decision makers or into the networks of middle class and elite citizens or professional educators.

Highly stratified horizontal networks may reflect a closed political system. In such a situation, professionals link with professionals, elite people network with other elite people and decision-makers and middle class organizations' leaders talk to other middle class organizations' leaders. For decision making to be more open and for the poor and working class people to participate more effectively in school affairs, communication through vertical networks is needed.

We see "networking" as having potential for cutting across public and private sector lines and linking local, state, and national citizen resources.

Neighborhood and citywide citizen-initiated groups can become keys to helping develop effective networks to which mandated councils can also contribute and from which they can benefit.

Public policies should encourage and facilitate (rather than inhibit) the development of the concept of networking in which citizen-initiated organizations serve and are allied with mandated groups. These public-private citizen linkages will be one important focus of the Institute for Responsive Education's continuing NIE-funded study of citizen organizations in Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles. This effort should result in a more finely-honed set of recommendations to policy makers concerned about halting the further erosion of citizen-initiated participation in the schools.

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